

June 29, 2006: Eshoo Demands Action from Commerce Secretary on Behalf of Salmon Fishermen

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[Press Release]

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Today, Congresswoman Anna G. Eshoo demanded action by Department of Commerce Secretary Gutierrez on the disaster faced by commercial salmon fishermen on the West Coast. Secretary Gutierrez was testifying before the House Energy and Commerce Committee on the state of the U.S. economy and job market when Eshoo insisted on an explanation for his failure to declare a fishing disaster for affected communities.

“There has been a failure, in my view, to respond to the dire emergency that’s affecting the commercial salmon fishing industry,” Eshoo said at the hearing. “This has had a devastating impact on salmon fishermen and related businesses along the California and Oregon coasts.”

In April of this year, Secretary Gutierrez approved a plan that virtually closed commercial salmon fishing off of the West Coast until 2007. This action represents the largest commercial salmon fishing closure in the history of the West Coast and the impact it has had on fishermen and coastal communities, particularly in Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz, has been nothing short of devastating. California and Oregon have estimated the losses of this decision will exceed \$81 million.

On May 19th the Southwest Regional office of NOAA Fisheries sent a document to NOAA headquarters pertaining to this year’s commercial salmon fishing season off the coasts of California and Oregon. According to NOAA staff, the document from the regional office included an economic analysis of the 2006 salmon season, including projected losses, and recommended that a disaster be declared so that federal assistance could be given to affected communities. Secretary Gutierrez promised to provide the document to Rep. Eshoo and her House Colleagues.

“The impact of the closure on the fishermen and the coastal communities is, really in many ways, unfathomable,” Eshoo added, “if you stand up and take action on this, it will help save the livelihoods that have been destroyed.”

Below is a full transcript of Rep. Eshoo’s statement before the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Rep. Anna G. Eshoo

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

June 29, 2006

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Good morning Mr. Secretary, and thank you for meeting with some of us that represent coastal communities in California, Oregon, and Washington State.

I'm going to direct my opening statement to the issue at hand and the devastation that we are talking about. America going to work. There are many, many, many of our constituents who are part of the fishing industry, that you heard about this morning, that have been devastated by what's taking place in these coastal communities.

There has been a failure, in my view, to respond to the dire emergency that's affecting the commercial salmon fishing industry, and this has had a devastating impact on salmon fishermen and related businesses along the California and Oregon Coast.

You've been to my congressional district, which everyone thinks of as solely Silicon Valley. But on the other side of the hill is the magnificent coast side, and this is a vital part of the economy there. The impact of the closure on the fishermen and the coastal communities is, really in many ways, unfathomable because it stretches across so many parts of this sector.

This is the largest commercial salmon fishing closure in the history of the West Coast. So we need your help. I think this has been worsened by the failure to recognize the damage the decision has caused and so your response is really going to be key. It is in your hands. Very often there are decisions that are made that span many agencies and many individuals. If you stand up and take action on this, it will help save the livelihoods that have been destroyed; people have actually lost their living.

Thank you for being here today. I appreciate the time that you spent with a handful of Members earlier and we are going to look forward to the action, I'm confident, after hearing the facts that you will take. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.